

American Battle Monuments Commission

Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery and Memorial

LOCATION

The Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery and Memorial lies 2 miles northwest of the village of Henri-Chapelle which is on the main highway from Liege, Belgium to Aachen, Germany (18 miles/29 km from Liege or 10 miles/16 km from Aachen). It can be reached by train from Paris (Gare du Nord 5 ½ hours), from Brussels (2 hours) and Liege, Belgium, or from Germany via Aachen, to Welkenraedt, Belgium, where taxicab service to the cemetery, 4 ½ miles distant, is available. To reach the cemetery by automobile, follow N-3 from Liege or Aachen to the road fork in Henri-Chapelle, thence northwest on N-18 to the cemetery; or, from Margraten follow Aachen highway east approximately 1 mile/1.6 km, then turn right on Aubel Road 7.5 miles/12 km to Hagelstein, thence left on N-18 to the cemetery or by AutoRoute E-5, Liege or Aachen to the Battice exit and then turn right onto N-3 to Henri-Chapelle.

HOURS

The cemetery is open daily to the public from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm except December 25 and January 1. It is open on host country holidays. When the cemetery is open to the public, a staff member is on duty in the Visitors' Building to answer questions and escort relatives to grave and memorial sites.

HISTORY

Following the successful landing on the beaches of Normandy on 6 June 1944, the Allies slowly but relentlessly fought their way inland to expand the beachhead. Then on 25 July, after a paralyzing air bombardment, the U.S. First Army launched the attack southward to break out. Joining the assault a few days later, the U.S. Third Army on the right flank thrust southward along the coast while the British and Canadians advanced on the left flank.

When the breakout occurred, Allied planners had expected the enemy to withdraw and reestablish a defense at the line of the Seine River to the northeast. Instead, the enemy launched a powerful counterattack in an attempt to split the Allied forces and isolate the U.S. Third Army. Resisting vigorously, Allied ground and air forces not only stopped the attacking enemy but threatened him with complete encirclement. Thoroughly defeated after suffering great losses, the enemy beat a hasty retreat across the Seine River.

Rapid exploitation of this victory resulted in swift Allied advances far exceeding expectations. On the left flank, the Canadian First Army drove along the coast reaching the Netherlands frontier and liberating Ostend and Bruges early in September, while the British Second Army advanced rapidly through central Belgium liberating Brussels on 3 September and Antwerp the following day. The British Second Army then moved to join with the Canadian First Army astride the Netherlands frontier.

In the center of the advance, the U.S. First Army freed Liege in eastern Belgium on 8 September and continued northeastward toward the Germany city of Aachen, while at the same time liberating Luxembourg. On the right, the U.S. Third Army swept across France to reach the Moselle River and make contact with the troops of the U.S. Seventh Army advancing from the beaches of southern France, where they had landed on 15 August.

Patrols of the U.S. First Army crossed the German frontier in the Ardennes area on 11 September. The next day, elements of the U.S. First Army crossed the frontier near Aachen and moved eastward toward the Siegfried Line, where strong resistance was encountered immediately. Almost simultaneously, progress slowed all along the advancing Allied line as opposition stiffened. The retreating enemy had at last stabilized its line of defense.

The Siegfried Line formed the core of resistance at the center of the enemy defenses. To the south in front of the U.S. Third and Seventh Armies, and the French First Army which extended Allied lines to the Swiss border, resistance was organized around heavily fortified cities forming strongpoints in front of the Siegfried Line. In the north, the defenders utilized to advantage against the British and Canadians the barriers formed by the extensive canal and river systems. On 17 September, a valiant combined airborne-ground assault in the Netherlands intended to outflank the north end of the enemy line, achieved only partial success as it failed to seize crossings of the lower Rhine.

For the next three months, intensive fighting produced only limited gains against fierce opposition. During this period, the principal Allied offensive effort was concentrated in the center of the enemy line where some of the most bitter fighting of the war occurred in the battle to capture the city of Aachen, the first large Germany city to be captured by the Allies, and penetrate the Siegfried Line. Finally, encircled in mid-October after savage house-to-house fighting, Aachen fell on 21 October. Meanwhile, the U.S. Ninth Army organized at Brest in Brittany, moved into the lines on the right flank of the U.S. First Army. To the south, the U.S. Third and Seventh Armies continued to advance slowly, as the U.S. Seventh Army forced the enemy back into the Vosges Mountains.

On 4 November, the U.S. First Army began the difficult struggle through the dense woods of the Hurtgen Forest. Shortly thereafter, the U.S. Ninth Army was shifted to the U.S. First Army's left flank. Then, on 16 November preceded by a massive air bombardment, the two armies attacked together opening a wide gap in the Siegfried Line. By 1 December, the Roer River line was reached. On the right, the city of Metz was captured by the U.S. Third Army on 22 November, although the last fort defending that city did not surrender until 13 December. The greatest territorial gains, however, came in the south where the U.S. Seventh Army penetrated the Vosges Mountains to liberate the

city of Strasbourg. On 23 November as French troops on the extreme right flank liberated Mulhouse.

The Canadian First Army finally cleared the Schelde estuary of the enemy and the great port city of Antwerp became available on 28 November to supply the Allied armies.

Suddenly on 16 December 1944, the Allied advance was interrupted when the enemy launched its final major counteroffensive of the war in the Ardennes, with a second major assault on New Year's Eve in Alsace to the south. After furious fighting in bitterly cold weather these last enemy onslaughts were halted and the lost ground regained. The Allies then developed their plan for final victory.

The first step of the plan was to clear the enemy from west of the Rhine. The subsequent step was to invade Germany itself. During February and March, with the aid and assistance of fighters and medium bombers, the first step was successfully completed and heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy. Because of those losses, the subsequent crossing of the Rhine did not meet with the violent opposition that had been anticipated. Working together, Allied ground and air forces swept victoriously across Germany, bringing the war in Europe to a conclusion on 8 May 1945.

SITE

The 57 acre cemetery lies on the crest of a ridge affording an excellent view to the east and west. The memorial is visible from Highway N-3 several miles away. Highway N-18 separates the overlook to the northwest from the rest of the cemetery.

The site was liberated on 12 September 1944 by troops of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division. A temporary cemetery was established on 28 September 1944 two or three hundred yards to the north of the present site which was selected because of its more attractive setting. Here rest 7,989 of our military Dead, most of whom gave their lives in the repulse of the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes or during the advance into, and cross Germany during the fall and winter of 1944 and the spring of 1945. Others were lost in air operations over the region. The cemetery and memorial were completed in 1960.

ARCHITECTS

Architects for the cemetery and memorial were Holabird, Root and Burgee of Chicago, Illinois. The landscape architect was Franz Lipp of Chicago.

GENERAL LAYOUT

To the west of Highway N-18 where it crosses the reservation is the overlook area with its flagstaff. From the west end of this area a wide view is afforded over the broad valley of the Berwinne streamlet (which lies in the sector of advance of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division) and the ridges beyond. The roadway on the overlook is lined with linden trees.

East of the highway is the memorial; there are parking areas at both the north and the south ends. Beyond the memorial is the graves area. Located in the south end of the memorial is the Visitors' Room and Museum.

THE MEMORIAL

The memorial consists of the chapel (north end) and the combined Visitors' and Museum building (south end) connected by a colonnade of 12 pairs of rectangular pylons. East of the colonnade is a wide terrace with ramps leading down to the graves area. The exterior of the memorial is of Massangis limestone from the Cote d'Or region of France. The colonnade, chapel and museum room are paved with gray St. Gothard granite from Switzerland.

THE COLONNADE

On the 48 faces of the 24 pylons and the 4 faces of the engaged pylons at the ends of the colonnade are engraved the seals of the wartime 48 States, 3 territories and the District of Columbia. The obverse of the Great Seal of the United States, in bronze, is set into the floor at the intersection of the axes. The names and particulars of 450 of the Missing of the United States Army and Army Air Forces* are engraved on the 48 faces of the columns. The engaged end pylons bear this inscription in English, French and Flemish:

HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF AMERICANS
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY
AND WHO SLEEP IN UNKNOWN GRAVES.

These Dead, who gave their lives in our country's service, came from 42 States, the District of Columbia and England. In the soffit of the colonnade are 13 stars of golden glass mosaic.

THE CHAPEL

At the entrance to the chapel, on the east side, is the dedicatory inscription:

1941-1945
? ?
IN PROUD REMEMBRANCE
OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HER SONS
AND IN HUMBLE TRIBUTE TO THEIR SACRIFICES
THIS MEMORIAL HAS BEEN ERECTED BY
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The doors of the chapel are bronze with polished panels.

The interior is rectangular in shape and of somewhat austere design. The altar of Belgian blue and French vert d'Issorie marble bears the inscription (from St. John X, 28):

I GAVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE
AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH

The wall behind the altar is of Belgian blue marble with white veinings. The south wall is of French green d'Issorie marble. Hung along the west wall are flags of the Air Force, Armor, Christian Chapel, Jewish Chapel, Engineers, Field Artillery, Infantry and Navy Infantry Battalion. Engraved on the same wall beneath the flags is this inscription from Cardinal Newman's prayer:

O LORD SUPPORT US ALL THE DAY LONG
UNTIL THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN AND OUR WORK IS DONE
THEN IN THY MERCY GRANT US A SAFE LODGING
AND A HOLY REST AND PEACE AT THE LAST

The pews are of walnut and were fabricated in Holland. The cross and the pews were intentionally designed to be off-center (with offcenter lighting) thus balancing each other.

THE MUSEUM ROOM

At the opposite (south) end of the colonnade is the combined Museum and Visitors' Room; the doors, similar to those of the chapel, are of dark bronze with polished panels inset. Built into the west interior wall, of English Portland Whitbed stone, is a map portraying the military operations in northwestern Europe from the landing in Normandy until the end of the war. This map is of Swedish black granite; the geographical and military data are indicated by means of inlaid mosaic, engraved and colored chases, anodized aluminum, bronze, etc. Amplifying the map are inscriptions in English, French and Flemish, of which this is the English version:

ON 6 JUNE 1944, PRECEDED BY AIRBORNE UNITS AND COVERED BY NAVAL AND AIR BOMBARDMENT, UNITED STATES AND BRITISH COMMONWEALTH FORCES LANDED ON THE COAST OF NORMANDY. PUSHING SOUTHWARD THEY ESTABLISHED A BEACHHEAD SOME 20 MILES IN DEPTH. ON 25 JULY, IN THE WAKE OF A PARALYZING AIR BOMBARDMENT BY THE U.S. EIGHTH AND NINTH AIR FORCES AND THE ROYAL AIR FORCE, THE U.S. FIRST ARMY BROKE OUT OF THE BEACHHEAD WEST OF ST. LO. ON 1 AUGUST IT WAS JOINED BY THE U.S. THIRD ARMY TOGETHER THEY REPULSED A POWERFUL COUNTERATTACK TOWARDS AVRANCHES. CRUSHED BETWEEN THE AMERICANS ON THE SOUTH AND WEST AND THE BRITISH ON THE NORTH, AND ATTACKED CONTINUOUSLY BY THE U.S. AND BRITISH AIR FORCES THE ENEMY RETREATED ACROSS THE SEINE.

SUSTAINED BY THE HERCULEAN ACHIEVEMENTS OF ARMY AND NAVY SUPPLY PERSONNEL, THE ALLIED GROUND AND AIR FORCES PURSUED VIGOROUSLY. BY MID-SEPTEMBER THE U.S. NINTH ARMY HAD LIBERATED BREST. THE FIRST ARMY HAD SWEEPED THROUGH FRANCE, BELGIUM, AND LUXEMBOURG AND WAS STANDING ON THE THRESHOLD OF GERMANY, THE THIRD ARMY HAD REACHED THE MOSELLE AND HAD JOINED FORCES WITH THE U.S. SEVENTH AND FRENCH FIRST ARMIES ADVANCING NORTHWARD FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN. ON THE LEFT

FLANK, BRITISH AND CANADIAN TROOPS HAD ENTERED THE NETHERLANDS. ON 17 SEPTEMBER THE IX TROOP CARRIER COMMAND AND THE ROYAL AIR FORCE DROPPED THREE AIRBORNE DIVISIONS IN THE EIDHOVEN-ARNHEM AREA IN A BOLD BUT UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO SEIZE THE CROSSINGS OF THE LOWER RHINE.

PROGRESS DURING THE NEXT THREE MONTHS WAS SLOW, THE FIGHTING BITTER AS OPPOSITION STIFFENED. THE OPENING OF THE PORT OF ANTWERP ON 28 NOVEMBER MATERIALLY EASED THE LOGISTICAL BURDEN. THE FIRST AND NINTH ARMIES BROKE THROUGH THE SIEGFRIED LINE AND CAPTURED AACHEN. METZ FELL AS THE THIRD ARMY PUSHED TO THE SAAR. ON ITS RIGHT, THE SEVENTH ARMY AIDED BY THE FIRST TACTICAL AIR FORCE DROVE TO THE RHINE AT STRASBOURG, WHILE FRENCH TROOPS FREED MULHOUSE THEN, IN THE ARDENNES, ON 16 DECEMBER, THE ENEMY LAUNCHED HIS FINAL MAJOR COUNTEROFFENSIVE. PROMPT TACTICAL COUNTERMEASURES AND THE SUPERB FIGHTING QUALITIES OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN FINALLY HALTED THIS DRIVE. A CONCURRENT OFFENSIVE LAUNCHED BETWEEN SAARBRUCKEN AND COLMAR MET THE SAME FATE.

DURING FEBRUARY AND MARCH THE WEST BANK OF THE RHINE WAS CLEARED IN A SERIES OF HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS. ON 7 MARCH AMERICAN FORCES SEIZED THE ONE REMAINING UNDEMOLISHED BRIDGE AT REMAGEN. A SURPRISE CROSSING WAS EFFECTED AT OPPENHEIM ON 22 MARCH. THEN, IN THE NEXT TWO DAYS ALLIED TROOPS SPEARHEADED BY A MASSIVE AIRBORNE ATTACK MADE THEIR MAJOR ASSAULT CROSSING NEAR WESEL. PUSHING RAPIDLY EASTWARD U.S. FORCES ENCIRCLED THE ENTIRE RUHR VALLEY IN A GIGANTIC DOUBLE ENVELOPMENT WITH AIR AND GROUND FORCES OPERATING AS A TEAM, THE ALLIES SWEEP ACROSS GERMANY TO MEET THE ADVANCING TROOPS OF THE USSR AT THE ELBE AND FORCE THE COMPLETE SURRENDER OF THE ENEMY ON 8 MAY 1945, 337 DAYS AFTER THE INITIAL LANDINGS IN FRANCE.

On the south wall is a somewhat smaller map, of materials similar to the other, entitled "Aachen and the Advance to the Roer"; it illustrates the military operations in this region. Accompanying this map is an inscribed text, also in three languages, the English version reading as follows:

ON 12 SEPTEMBER 1944 THE U.S. FIRST ARMY CROSSED THE GERMAN FRONTIER NEAR AACHEN. HERE THE BROAD, SWEEPING ADVANCE ACROSS FRANCE AND BELGIUM WAS SLOWED BY THE STRONGLY FORTIFIED SIEGFRIED LINE. STRUGGLING FORWARD AGAINST INCREASING RESISTANCE, INFANTRY AND ARMORED FORCES BROKE THROUGH TO STOLBERG, EAST OF AACHEN. PROGRESS WAS SLOW, THE FIGHTING OBSTINATE, AS OUR TROOPS FORCED THEIR WAY INTO HURTGEN FOREST TO SHEVENHUTTE AND BEYOND LAMMERSDORF, THREATENING THE ROER RIVER DAMS.

ON 2 OCTOBER THE FIRST ARMY LAUNCHED AN ATTACK NORTH OF AACHEN. AFTER SIX DAYS OF HEAVY FIGHTING, AIDED BY FIGHTERS AND MEDIUM BOMBERS OF THE NINTH AIR FORCE, OUR GROUND FORCES HAD PUSHED THROUGH THE SIEGFRIED LINE AND TURNED SOUTHWARD TOWARDS WURSELEN, UNITS TO THE EAST THEN JOINED THE ASSAULT. WHEN THE GARRISON IN AACHEN REFUSED A SURRENDER ULTIMATUM, U.S. FORCES LAUNCHED A MASSIVE AIR AND ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT AGAINST THEM; FURIOUS FIGHTING MARKED THE ENEMY'S DETERMINED EFFORT TO REINFORCE THE AREA. BY 16 OCTOBER THE CITY HAD BEEN ENCIRCLED; SUCCESSIVE ATTEMPTS TO RELIEVE THE GARRISON WERE FIRMLY REPULSED. ON 21 OCTOBER AACHEN SURRENDERED, THE FIRST LARGE GERMAN CITY TO FALL INTO ALLIED HANDS.

THE U.S. NINTH ARMY THEN MOVED INTO POSITION ON THE LEFT OF THE FIRST ARMY. ON 16 NOVEMBER, FOLLOWING A DEVASTATING BOMBING BY THE EIGHTH AND NINTH AIR FORCES, OUR ARMIES LAUNCHED AN OFFENSIVE TOWARDS THE ROER. THE ATTACK ADVANCED SLOWLY EASTWARD AGAINST DETERMINED RESISTANCE AND FURIOUS COUNTERATTACKS. THE NATURAL BARRIER OF THE HURTGEN FOREST, NOW GREATLY STRENGTHENED BY INGENIOUS FORTIFICATIONS, PRESENTED A SERIOUS DELAYING OBSTACLE.

NOT IN YEARS HAD EUROPEAN WEATHER BEEN SO UNFAVORABLE FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS BUT BY 15 DECEMBER FIRST ARMY UNITS HAD REACHED THE ROER FROM DUREN NORTHWARD. ATTACKS THROUGH THE HURTGEN FOREST WERE STILL IN PROGRESS WHEN, IN THE ARDENNES, ON 16 DECEMBER, THE ENEMY LOOSED HIS LAST GREAT COUNTEROFFENSIVE OF THE WAR. THE FIRST ARMY MOVED INSTANTLY TO MEET THE THREAT, SUSPENDING OFFENSIVE ACTION IN THE HURTGEN FOREST AREA UNTIL AFTER THE VICTORIOUS CONCLUSION OF THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN ON 25 JANUARY 1945.

The maps were designed by Sante Graziani of Worcester, Massachusetts, from information furnished by the American Battle Monuments Commission. They were fabricated by Enrico Pandolfini of Pietrasanta, Italy. Under the map of military operations in Northwestern Europe is a stand of white Carrara marble bearing the two sets of key maps, "The War Against Germany" and "The War Against Japan."

THE GRAVES AREA

East of the colonnade a terrace affords a prospect over the burial area. Immediately in front is the bronze statue of the Archangel bestowing the laurel branch upon the heroic Dead for whom he makes special commendation to the Almighty. This was designed by Donal Hord of San Diego, California, and cast by Battaglia of Milan, Italy.

The graves area is divided into 8 plots, lettered "A" to "H"; these are separated by the broad axial mall and by longitudinal grass paths. The 7,989 headstones are arranged in broad sweeping curves upon the gently sloping lawn. These Dead came from 49 States, and from the District of Columbia, Panama and England. Among the graves are

33 instances in which 2 brothers rest side by side, and one instance of 3 brothers; also there are headstones marking the tombs of 94 Unknowns.

The central mall terminates in a wall-enclosed flag pole plaza, backed by a copse of oak and spruce trees. On the wall is the inscription:

IN HONORED MEMORY OF THOSE
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY.

PLANTINGS

The memorial is set within a framework of Box hedges (*Buxus sempervirens*), which has been extended to form a border to the paths which lead to the graves area.

In the lawns at each end of the memorial are groups of weeping willows (*Salix babylonia*); flanking the memorial north and south of the grass terrace on which it stands, are groups of Siberian Spruce (*Picea omorika*) and Norway Spruce (*Picea excelsa*) mixed with Hawthorns (*Crataegus oxyacantha*).

Along the paved approach to the memorial are large beds of pink Polyantha roses and adjoining the colonnade itself are to be found other massifs of white roses.

Within the graves areas Birch (*Betula alba* and *B. nigra*), Hornbeam (*Carpinus getulus*), and YEW (*Taxus baccata*) have been planted and free growing Box has been massed in-groups against the surrounding walls. Beyond the wall also are groups of Rhododendron ponticum and shrubby Chestnut (*Aesculus parviflora*) and a number Norway Spruce.

VISITORS' ROOM

The Visitors' Room is in the south end of the memorial and can be reached either from the colonnade or from the south parking area and a door at the south end of the memorial. It contains the superintendent's office, restroom facilities and a comfortably furnished area where visitors may rest, obtain information, sign the register and pause to refresh themselves. Whenever the cemetery is open to the public, a staff member is available to provide information on specific burial and memorialization locations in any of the Commission's cemeteries, accommodations in the vicinity, best means and routes of travel, local history and other items that may be of interest.